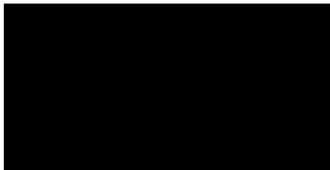




Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs  
American Mental Health Counselors Association

---

October 1, 2012



*RE: Federal Educational Standards for the Practice of Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Dear Dean 

With the publication of TRICARE's interim final rule from the Department of Defense on December 27, 2011, it is abundantly clear those students who graduate from your institution and wish to work as professional counselors in federal agencies will need to complete the following requirements:

1. Graduate from a program in clinical mental health counseling accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP);
2. Achieve a passing score on the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) as provided by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC); and
3. Complete all requirements to be state licensed in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes

These requirements have been adopted by federal agencies in accordance with the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) report to Congress regarding the standards for clinical mental health counselors. IOM reported that **only** CACREP-accredited programs "can ensure high standards of preparation to protect the public." Thus, it is likely that IOM prerequisites will again be enacted into law when Medicare reimbursement is authorized for professional counselors.

The American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) and CACREP endorse the IOM requisite standards. All established professions, such as medicine, nursing, clinical psychology, and social work, mandate graduation from programs qualified by their respective accrediting organizations before individuals can become fully licensed. With the advent of IOM requisites, it has become incumbent for AMHCA and CACREP to advocate for the same level of national recognition for clinical mental health counseling.

Licensure for professional counselors working as clinical mental health practitioners has now been achieved in all 50 states. We believe it is important to work with state licensing boards to adopt the IOM's standards. It is just a matter of time before professional counselor licensure boards begin requiring graduation from a CACREP-accredited program to meet the educational training requirement for licensure. It may well be the insurance providers will begin to reimburse only for

those individuals who have met the federal standards. This will put professional counselor licensure requirements on par with the other established professions. It will also remove the main obstacle to professional counselor licensure portability.

If not already accredited or in the application process, we strongly encourage your university to consider seeking CACREP accreditation for your clinical mental health counseling program. By doing this, your academic program will accrue several advantages:

- National accreditation by the only accrediting agency in the Counseling profession accepted as a hiring credential by the federal government.
- Educational program recognition that best prepares students to pass the very demanding National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
- Increased employment opportunities in federal agencies for your graduates.
- Enhanced licensure portability in the event the student or graduate must relocate.
- The ability to recruit graduate students through promoting your program as "CACREP-accredited" which complies with federal standards of employment and reimbursement.

These are all marketing advantages for recruiting applicants into your program. Prospective applicants will be most attracted to those programs which offer the best return on the costs for graduate education. Today, universities with established programs are pursuing CACREP accreditation for the advantages it provides to their program and their students.

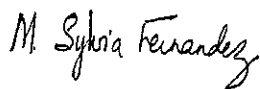
We believe that CACREP accreditation offers added academic stature that will only continue to grow in the coming years. In supporting your university, CACREP offers:

- No-cost, web-based documents that provide a proven pathway to accreditation in the least amount of time.
- Full day workshops that focus on how to write a self-study (with discounted registration fees when institutions choose to send more than one faculty member) .
- Access to professional staff who are knowledgeable with regard to the CACREP Standards, processes and procedures, and can provide step-by-step support in achieving accreditation.
- Recommendations for consultants who may work with programs on a more individualized level.
- Answers to frequently asked questions which can be found on the CACREP website at [www.cacrep.org](http://www.cacrep.org) and some of which are included in this letter.

With the advent of requisites for federal employment and reimbursement, we believe your university can become an advocate for students in achieving the highest level of clinical mental health counseling educational standards. The time has arrived that the counseling profession, like all other health-related professions, must meet national standards. In many states, CACREP accreditation has already become the standard for program excellence.

For more information contact the CACREP office at (703) 535-5990 or visit the CACREP website at [www.cacrep.org](http://www.cacrep.org). If we can be of assistance, please contact us and we will be happy to furnish any support necessary to make an informed decision in the crucial area of CACREP accreditation.

Sincerely,



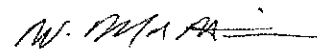
Sylvia Fernandez  
Chair, CACREP



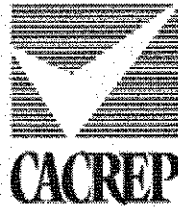
Carol L. Bobby  
CEO, CACREP



Karen Langer  
President, AMHCA



Mark Hamilton  
CEO, AMHCA



## Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

---

### Frequently Asked Questions

- *What accreditation standards need to be met in order for graduates to be eligible for employment with TRICARE?*

Programs wishing to prepare students for work within the TRICARE system should seek accreditation under CACREP's Clinical Mental Health Counseling Standards.

- *What if we have students who graduate before the program becomes accredited?*

CACREP policy states that, beginning January 2008, accreditation can be applied retroactively to any graduates of the program for twelve (12) months prior to the decision date. These graduates, however, must have met all of the requirements of the program that was granted accreditation.

- *How long does the accreditation process take?*

How long the self-study process takes is up to the institution. Some have completed their applications and sent them to CACREP within a year. Once the self-study arrives in our office, it takes an average of one year to complete the review process and receive a final Board decision.

- *Can undergraduate courses count in the graduate degree?*

No, all courses counted in the credit hour requirement must be graduate level. Sometimes courses are cross-listed as both upper level undergraduate courses and graduate. If that is the case, the course can count if they enrolled in it using the graduate course number and as long as the student didn't also use it toward their undergraduate degree requirements.

- *Does the program have to operate a counseling clinic?*

Programs do not have to operate counseling clinics. The CACREP Standards use the term counseling instruction environment. The counseling instruction environment is the space allocated for modeling, demonstration, supervision, and training purposes. These facilities are primarily utilized for the pre-practicum training that students receive in basic individual and group counseling skills. Some programs also utilize these facilities for practica and/or internships.

- *What qualifications are required of the core faculty?*

They must have earned doctoral degrees in counselor education and supervision, preferably from a CACREP-accredited program, or have been employed as full-time faculty members in a counselor education program for a minimum of one full academic year before July 1, 2013. In addition, the core faculty members' responsibilities will include advising, serving on committees, and demonstrating faculty citizenship in counselor education. Master's-level programs must have a minimum of three core faculty members and doctoral programs must have a minimum of five core faculty members.

*For more program-related FAQs, visit the CACREP website at [www.cacrep.org](http://www.cacrep.org)*